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Somerset 8' 215





Amurak S. 28

Amurak D.



A  
NARRATIVE

OF THE  
PROCEEDINGS

OF THE  
GOVERNORS

OF THE  
GRAMMAR-SCHOOL IN BRUTON,

FROM  
THE DEATH OF THE LATE LORD BERKELEY  
TO THE PRESENT TIME.

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO  
THE NEIGHBOURING NOBILITY AND GENTLEMEN,  
NATURAL GUARDIANS OF THE SCHOOL  
BY THEIR SITUATION;

AND  
SUBMITTED TO THE PERUSAL OF ALL WHO MAY BE  
INTERESTED IN ITS WELL-BEING.

---

BY THE MASTER.

---

Semper ego auditor tantum? nunquamne reponam  
Vexatus toties?

JUV.

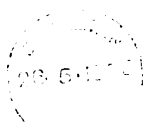
Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.

SHAKESPEARE.

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PRINTED IN MDCCXCII.







A

## NARRATIVE, &c.

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**T**HE man who holds a publick office is responsible to the publick for his conduct in it. Of this denomination is the Mastership of an endowed Grammar-School. The publick has a just claim on every Master of such a School for the constant exertion of his literary abilities. From such a discharge of his duty, and from such alone, he may have reason to hope for the favour and patronage of a discerning neighbourhood.

An equal degree of responsibility to the publick tribunal, the Trustees or Governors of an endowed Grammar-School subject themselves to on *their* entrance into office. True it is, that they act in a different department from that of the Master. But unless their endeavours co-operate with his exertions, the wishes and expectations of the publick

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are

are not likely to be fully answered. *Their* countenance is necessary to *his* success. But if, instead of giving him their friendly aid and protection, to sweeten his toils of duty, and to smooth its rugged paths, they unhappily resolve to oppose every effort he can make, such unhappy resolutions are the certain forerunners of ruin and destruction: vain and fruitless are all subsequent hopes of success: an unnatural opposition from this quarter suddenly blasts the expectations both of the publick and of the master: *actum est, ilicet, periisti.*

Short as I wish the following narrative to be, necessity will, I fear, compel me to protract it to a length agreeable neither to my reader nor myself.

In the year 1769 I received my appointment to the Mastership of Bruton School, in the following form:—

“ Know all men by these presents, that the Right  
 “ Hon. John Lord Berkeley, Thomas Sampson,  
 “ Robert Pavy, John Dampier, George Cox,  
 “ William Vigar, Gerard Martin, Harry Albin  
 “ Martin, Joseph Whitehead, John Morren, Thomas  
 “ Whitehead, William Snooke, Governors of the  
 “ Free Grammar-School of King Edward the Sixth  
 “ in

“ in Bruton, in the county of Somerset, by virtue  
 “ and in pursuance of the power and authority to  
 “ them given, in and by the charter granted in the  
 “ reign of the said King, and of all and every or  
 “ any other power and authority in them vested or  
 “ reposed, have nominated and appointed, and by  
 “ these presents do nominate and appoint Edward  
 “ Michell, late of Kingsbridge in the county of  
 “ Devon, but now of Bruton aforesaid, Clerk,  
 “ from the date hereof to be Master of the said  
 “ School, as long as he shall behave well in his  
 “ office, for the education, teaching, and instruction  
 “ of youth in grammar. And we do further ap-  
 “ point him, during such time for the purpose  
 “ aforesaid, the possession, use, and occupation of  
 “ the said school, school-house, garden, green, and  
 “ appurtenances to the same belonging, and an  
 “ annual stipend or salary of fifty pounds, clear of  
 “ all deductions, to be issued and paid to him by  
 “ equal half-yearly payments at Christmas and  
 “ Midsummer, out of the rents, revenues, and pro-  
 “ fits of the lands, tenements, hereditaments, or  
 “ other emoluments belonging or appertaining to  
 “ the said school, the first payment to be made on  
 “ Christmas-day next ensuing the date hereof. In  
 “ witness whereof the said Governors have put their  
 “ common seal and subscribed their names to these  
 A 3 “ presents,

" presents, the fourteenth day of August one thousand seven hundred and sixty-nine.

" *Berkeley,*  
 " *John Dampier,*  
 " *Gerard Martin,*  
 " *Thomas Whitehead,*  
 " *Joseph Whitehead,*  
 " *Harry Albin Martin,*  
 " *John Morren,*  
 " *William Snooke.*

" I do approve of the within appointment,

" *E. Bath & Wells."*

Here I would observe, that Mr. H. A. Martin, who drew the appointment, informed me that the words *clear of all deductions* would fully answer the intention of the Governors, by guarding me against expences of any kind. On this assurance, a fair copy was drawn for the signature of the Governors. The school, at which not a single boy had been educated for fourteen years immediately preceding my appointment, now began to revive. I had several young gentlemen from Devonshire and this neighbourhood in my house, and many day-boys from the town and circumjacent villages.

In

In the year 1771, the late Lord Berkeley, seeing the duty to be done by the Master more than equal to the emoluments of his office, proposed to the Governors, that with a view of raising my salary he would pay off their debt of 250l. This liberal offer was gladly accepted. In consequence of this discharge of the debt, the following appointment was drawn by Mr. H. A. Martin, and approved of by the Governors:

“ Whereas Edward Michell, of Bruton in the  
 “ county of Somerset, Clerk, by deed of appoint-  
 “ ment dated the fourteenth day of August 1769,  
 “ duly executed and confirmed, was elected and  
 “ appointed Master of the Free Grammar-School  
 “ of King Edward the Sixth in Bruton aforesaid, as  
 “ long as he should behave well in his office; with  
 “ an appointment of a stipend or salary of fifty  
 “ pounds a year, clear of all deductions, to be issu-  
 “ ing and paid out of the rents, revenues, and pro-  
 “ fits of the lands, tenements, hereditaments, or  
 “ other emoluments, belonging or appertaining to  
 “ the said school, which was as much as could then  
 “ be appropriated to his use, paying a proper atten-  
 “ tion to the discharge of a debt of 250l. due from  
 “ the said school; but the said 250l. having been  
 “ since paid off and discharged by the Right Hon.  
 “ John

“ John Lord Berkeley, Baron of Stratton, for the  
 “ benefit and advantage of the said Edward Michell  
 “ and the succeeding Masters for the time being,  
 “ We, the Governors of the said school, whose  
 “ names are hereunder subscribed, duly considering  
 “ the state of the said school revenues and disburse-  
 “ ments, therefore, and in pursuance of the powers  
 “ to us given in and by the charter granted by  
 “ Edward the Sixth, by and with the advice and con-  
 “ sent of the Right Worshipful the Lord Bishop of  
 “ Bath and Wells, have nominated and appointed,  
 “ and by these presents do nominate and appoint to  
 “ and for him the said Edward Michell, as long as  
 “ he shall continue and be Master of the said school,  
 “ the further annual stipend or salary of thirty  
 “ pounds (making with the fifty pounds the yearly  
 “ sum of eighty pounds) clear of all deductions, to  
 “ be issuing and paid him yearly, and on Midsum-  
 “ mer-day in every year, out of the rents, revenues,  
 “ and profits of the lands, tenements, heredita-  
 “ ments, or other emoluments belonging or apper-  
 “ taining to the said school, the first payment to be  
 “ made on the 24th day of June next ensuing the  
 “ date hereof.

“ In witness whereof the said Governors have  
 “ put their common seal, and subscribed their  
 “ names

" names to these presents, the thirtieth day of  
 " November one thousand seven hundred and  
 " seventy-one.

" *E. Bath & Wells.*

" *Berkeley,*  
 " *Joseph Whitehead,*  
 " *Harry Albin Martin,*  
 " *Gerard Martin,*  
 " *Thomas Whitehead,*  
 " *William Snooke,*  
 " *Charles Moore,*  
 " *George Cox,*  
 " *John Morren."*

There was now every appearance of a rising school. In the midst of this pleasing prospect, a sudden coolness towards me on the part of two of the leading Governors arose, a coolness unaccountable then, and unaccounted for to this day. I begged an explanation; none could be obtained. Whoever has experienced a similar treatment, will be enabled to judge of my feelings. The consideration of my Lord Berkeley's advanced age, at whose death the sole government of the school would in fact devolve on these my two cool friends, determined me to take the first convenient opportunity of leaving Bruton. A very advantageous  
 one



one soon presented itself; a school became vacant worth 300l. a year, exclusive of boarders. To my unalterable friend, my Lord Berkeley, I made my request to procure it for me. His Lordship was pleased to express his wishes that I would not think of removing; but on his seeing me resolved, he kindly complied with my request. By my Lord Berkeley's application to Lord Godolphin, I received an offer of the school from the Mayor and Corporation. The sequel I blush to relate, as it will exhibit a strong proof of my own folly in the extreme. During my absence from Bruton to wait on Lord Berkeley in London, it became known that I was about to leave my school here. Upon this, the most earnest application was again and again made to my family before my return home, by one of the above Governors, requesting them to endeavour to influence me to remain here. This request was not complied with. Further applications were made before my return, with a promise that the house should be put into any state my family would wish, and that the whole should be handsome, and (to borrow an epithet) *decorous*. At my return, I was assured by the same Governor, that if I would remain here, my school should be equal in point of advantage to that which I had now accepted. In short, the gentleman assured me  
of

of every thing great, *modo non montes auri pollicens*. Such assurances on one side, and a certainty of Lord Berkeley's friendship on the other, I unfortunately permitted to weigh with me. His Lordship, with his wonted benevolence, easily admitted of my apology for having given himself trouble: and by his direction I wrote a letter to the Mayor of the town, containing my best thanks for the favour conferred on me, but that my views here were altered, &c. Here was I now once again settled, and once again my old friends speedily reverted to their former coolness. The death of Lord Berkeley too soon plained the way to a more open attack. The necessary repairs of the school-house were almost totally neglected, and the greater part of it was become unfit for the reception of Gentlemen's sons. The glass of the windows was permitted to remain broken for years: and on my sending to a senior warden, that quantities of snow were driven into my own sleeping-room through the broken panes, I received the polite and memorable answer, that "I had nothing to do but to shovel it out again;" and I have been necessitated to apply for a long continuance paper as a substitute for glass. The school, however, continued still to thrive: and my success in it was, I believe, deemed an intolerable injury. The neglect of the school-house was  
not

not considered as a punishment adequate to the gratification of that unnatural thirst for vengeance, which a mental dropsy had raised. On a certain afternoon the late Mr. Martin called on Mr. Hunt, then resident at Pitcombe. If an event less serious than the destruction of that fabrick, which I had been for several years raising, had been the consequence of their short conversation; if the ruin of a school essentially interesting to this town and neighbourhood, had not been the speedy effect of this laconic conference; and if the publick had not a right to be informed of the cause of the rapid decay of the school: in short, if the voice of cogent necessity did not call on me, the name of Mr. Martin, to whom I have been indebted for various civilities, would have been unseen in this narrative. No other emotion, than that which originates from compassion, can be supposed to have possession of the human breast, after so long a series of years, upon reflecting on the frailty of a fellow-creature. Nor at such an interval will any soliloquy proceed from the lips, of a tendency differing from *Alas ! poor human nature !*

Mr. Hunt invited his friend to alight and walk in, at the same time telling him that several gentlemen of Mr. M's acquaintance were with him.

Mr.

Mr. M. excused himself, by replying, that he was engaged to attend a school-meeting at Bruton, in order *to turn out the Master*.

Gentlemen conversant in schools, well know success in them to be very unstable and fluctuating, even where the efforts of all parties concerned are made in favour and support of them. But when such an expression as the above is made use of by a leading Governor of a school, and a man of weight in the neighbourhood; one such breath of rough air blasts and withers the fairest and most promising blossoms. Though none of the young gentlemen then at the school were taken off, yet the school soon became a declining one; their successors were very few.

Now from the legality of the Master's appointments, and from the line of conduct which he invariably pursued, the Governors well knew such a measure as the above to be impracticable. However, the attempt answered an end such as it was; or rather the *report*; for an attempt was never meant. But lest the success of the Master should perchance survive the wound already inflicted, another energetic attempt, of a tendency perfectly similar to that of the former, was made, an attempt distinguished by an equal degree of candour respecting

specting the Master, and of regard to the well-being of the School. The same Governors, who, on my appointment to the school, advertised that the school-house was properly fitted up for the reception of young gentlemen as boarders, (which advertisement I have by me) those same Governors now *insisted on my having no right to take boarders, and that the free boys had a claim on me for my whole attention.* The former attempt was confessedly made against the Master: but by the latter, Gentlemen of the first fortunes are prohibited from sending their sons to this school, but on the footing of free-boys. The two Mr. Uphills, of Lamyatt and Lydford, were each about to send a son to me, when they were informed by a Governor of the School that they could not *pay* for their education without doing a very great injury. However, to this information they paid very little regard, and refused to send their sons till I consented to make my charge. Thus unpleasantly situated, I appealed to the Right Reverend Visitor, whether I had a right to take boarders or not? His Lordship was clearly of opinion that I had a right. This opinion was given in presence of the Governors convened at the palace on another matter nearly allied to and congenial with the two preceding attempts, This comes now to be adverted to.

A message

A message was sent to me from the Governors by their servant the late Thomas Moore, August the 9th, 1774, attended by Mr. John Bull, at whose house the Governors then were, *that my salary of eighty pounds a year, was from that time to be reduced to fifty.* No reason was given for their taking this step; this would have been too kind, as it would have put me out of a state of suspense. This daring measure gave offence to the gentlemen of the neighbourhood as well as of the town, by whom the following petition to the Right Rev. Visitor was signed, and speedily presented to his Lordship :

“ To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of  
“ Bath and Wells.

“ May it please your Lordship,

“ WE, the principal inhabitants of the town and  
“ neighbourhood of Bruton in the county of So-  
“ merfet, beg leave to petition your Lordship in a  
“ matter of the greatest importance to this town and  
“ neighbourhood, to the present age, and posterity.

“ As we cannot but admire the wisdom of the  
“ Royal Founder of the Grammar-School in this  
“ town, in constituting by charter the Lord Bishop  
“ of

“ of Bath and Wells for the time being the Visitor  
 “ of the School, with the gracious design that his  
 “ Lordship might check and restrain the illegal or  
 “ otherwise improper conduct of the Governors of  
 “ the School, so we think ourselves peculiarly happy  
 “ in having at this critical juncture (when innova-  
 “ tions of, we conceive, dangerous tendency are in-  
 “ troducing by the present *not legal* number of  
 “ Governors) a Visitor to petition of acknowledged  
 “ abilities in transacting business, and of zealous  
 “ inclinations to promote useful learning.

“ By the charter, my Lord, your petitioners ap-  
 “ prehend the Governors of the School are obliged  
 “ to elect a new Governor or Governors in the place  
 “ of any one or more who shall die, or remove from  
 “ the town and parish of Bruton to reside, at a  
 “ meeting immediately subsequent to either of such  
 “ events. This has been the invariable rule, as  
 “ your Lordship’s petitioners believe, observed by  
 “ the Governors from the foundation of the school  
 “ till within four or five years past, as often as a  
 “ vacancy has been made by death. Where va-  
 “ cancies have been made by removal, it is appre-  
 “ hended that modern Governors have not been  
 “ so exact in filling such vacancies, as the charter  
 “ seems to require. But not to fill vacancies in  
 “ cases

“ cases of death your Lordship’s petitioners believe is without precedent, and an innovation brought in by the present Governors.

“ There are now five vacancies; of which two have been made by removal, and three by death. The major part of those vacancies has subsisted for several years, during which period not a single Governor has been elected, though the present Governors have been repeatedly called on to proceed to an election.

“ At a meeting of the Governors, about October 1776, Mr. George Cox, at that time a Governor, recommended it to the body of Governors to fill the vacancies, and proposed the Earl of Ilchester, an inhabitant of the parish, to be by them elected. Mr. Cox’s motion was negatived. At their summer meeting in 1777, Mr. Cox again proposed the Earl of Ilchester. A negative was again put on Mr. Cox’s motion; to which the then senior warden, Mr. Gerard Martin, added, that *there were Governors enough already to do the business.*

“ In this situation, my Lord, things are at present. The ill consequences of not filling the  
B “ vacancies



“ vacancies are already manifest: the rents from  
 “ the estates belonging to the school, that have till  
 “ lately been always adequate to the annual pay-  
 “ ments and outgoings, are now found to fall  
 “ greatly short. The Master’s salary remains un-  
 “ paid; the School-house is out of repair. The  
 “ Governors plead an inability for want of money  
 “ to repair the one, or to pay the other. Your  
 “ Lordship’s petitioners do not mean to determine  
 “ precisely the reason of such the conduct of the  
 “ Governors. But at the same time they cannot  
 “ but apprehend that some latent cause influences  
 “ their proceedings, which they cannot conceive to  
 “ be for the benefit and advantage of their trust and  
 “ the publick.

“ Your petitioners rely on your Lordship’s good-  
 “ nefs for making use of that authority, with which  
 “ your Lordship is invested by the Royal charter,  
 “ in order to give your petitioners such relief and  
 “ assistance in the above matter as the necessity  
 “ of the case seems to require.

“ Your Lordship’s petitioners cannot conceive  
 “ that the hasty opinion of the late senior warden,  
 “ that *there are Governors enough already to do the*  
 “ *business*, can with any degree of propriety or  
 “ decency

“ decency be set in competition with the solemn  
 “ determination of the Royal founder, assisted by  
 “ his Privy Council, who were pleased to fix on  
 “ *twelve of the more substantial inhabitants of the*  
 “ *town and parish of Bruton*, as the most proper  
 “ number for transacting the business of the school  
 “ *by and with the advice of the Lord Bishop of Bath*  
 “ *and Wells.*

“ Your Lordship, by directing the Governors to  
 “ fill the present vacancies, will merit the sincere  
 “ thanks of this town and neighbourhood, and  
 “ convey unfulfilled in their proper channels to dis-  
 “ tant ages those fountains of liberality and useful  
 “ learning, which the piety of King Edward the  
 “ Sixth opened, and commanded to flow for the  
 “ good of mankind in general, and of this town  
 “ and neighbourhood in particular “ *from time to*  
 “ *time for ever.*”

From the above petition the proceedings of the  
 Governors, and the sentiments of the public respect-  
 ing their proceedings, stand forward equally conspi-  
 cuous. And the necessity for its insertion will, I  
 trust, be an apology for me with my Lord Ilchester  
 for the mention of his Lordship's name with such  
 proceedings. The late Mr. George Cox was of

opinion that the election of my Lord Ilchester into the government would be the means of setting the school affairs on a respectable footing. It was thought necessary that I should wait on his Lordship, to ask his permission that Mr. Cox might propose his Lordship to the Governors at their next meeting. After hearing how matters stood, his Lordship, in the most obliging and condescending manner, replied, that if he could be of any service to the school, he had no objection to being proposed as a Governor.

The sequel I wish to get rid of in few words. My Lord Ilchester was rejected, and Mr. William James and Mr. Joseph Palmer were chosen. Such a procedure wants no comment. It is no sooner read, than a man translates it instantly into the plainest English: O lust of sway, what havock hast thou not made in human affairs!

The reader will be beforehand with me in asking this question, Is not my Lord Ilchester at this time a Governor? To this question the present derangement and confusion are a full answer. But in consequence of his Lordship's kind offer of assistance at the above interesting crisis, has no subsequent compliment been paid him by the present leading family

family in our scholastic affairs? To the best of my knowledge and belief the opportunity even of a refusal to be elected has been denied to his Lordship, but not for want of vacancies.

— *Pudet hæc opprobria nobis  
Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.*

I beg my reader's permission to go on with this digression one step further. It has not escaped the notice of gentlemen, that six of the present Governors are of *one family*. This family, by the assistance of one or two other Governors, whom prudential motives of a private nature may be supposed to influence in taking their resolutions, are in truth and fact the sole Governors of the School. Now though such elections are not chargeable with illegality, delicacy and propriety were not consulted on those occasions; who, if they really are in the picture, are thrown so far into the back-ground, as to be by no means perceptible by a common eye. In short, wherever such an ascendancy is gained in the management of a public charity by one family, as has been gained by two families in immediate succession in the direction of this school for now about nineteen years, the consequences to be expected are such as have actually ensued here during all that period.

period. Nor will the consideration be, whether an unlettered man in extreme poverty is likely to do more service to the public as a Governor than a Peer of the Realm, but whether he is more likely to concur with his electors in all their measures.

But to proceed. To the truth of the contents of the following paper, Mr. Sampson, now a Governor, was ready to bear testimony in any manner. There is every reason to think that he did testify the truth of the whole, or of its most interesting parts, in an interview with the Right Reverend Visitor at the palace, where Mr. Sampson kindly attended for the sole purpose of throwing light on some misrepresentations and unjustifiable proceedings.

“ Whereas Thomas Sampson, surgeon, a principal inhabitant of Bruton in the county of Somerset, has been assured that several informations have been laid with the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, which are not conformable to truth, and which said informations tend greatly to injure the reputation of the Rev. Edward Michell as Master of the Free Grammar-School in Bruton, and to deprive him of that assistance from the Lord Bishop of Bath  
“ and

“ and Wells, which it is in the power of his Lord-  
 “ ship as Visitor to give; this deponent therefore,  
 “ in order to undeceive his Lordship, and to do  
 “ justice to a man, who since the death of the late  
 “ Lord Berkeley has been repeatedly insulted and  
 “ oppressed by the Governors of the School, volun-  
 “ tarily declareth and saith, that the said Edward  
 “ Michell from the time of his being elected Master  
 “ to the present has, as this deponent verily be-  
 “ lieves, discharged his duty regularly and faithfully  
 “ towards every individual committed to his charge  
 “ as Master of the School. That the said depo-  
 “ nent had a nephew near six years under the care  
 “ and tuition of the said Edward Michell at the  
 “ said school: that the said Edward Michell faith-  
 “ fully discharged, as this deponent believes, his  
 “ obligations to his said nephew. That his nephew  
 “ has frequently expressed to this deponent and  
 “ others, since he left the school, a grateful sense of  
 “ his obligations to the said Master for his care in  
 “ instructing him, and conduct in every other re-  
 “ spect towards him. That this deponent believes  
 “ that every person, who has sent a boy or boys to  
 “ the school is willing to testify that the said Mas-  
 “ ter’s conduct has been in all respects strictly  
 “ proper from the time of his being elected Master  
 “ to the present. That instead of depriving the  
 boys

" boys resorting to the school of the green to amuse  
 " themselves in, or of any other convenience be-  
 " longing to the premises, (as it has been, this de-  
 " ponent apprehends, suggested) he knows that the  
 " said Edward Michell has been at a very great  
 " expence in putting the green into decent order  
 " for the accommodation of all the boys frequenting  
 " the said school, and that the green is in better  
 " condition now than the deponent ever knew it,  
 " though he has known it many years. And this  
 " deponent knows, as from his situation he is an  
 " almost daily witness to the truth of it, that all  
 " the boys frequenting the said school from the  
 " time the said Edward Michell was elected Master  
 " to the present, have constantly been permitted to  
 " use the green as a place of diversion, unless, for a  
 " fault committed, any of them have subjected  
 " themselves to the punishment of a temporary ex-  
 " clusion. And further, this deponent believes,  
 " (he having been thus informed by his nephew,  
 " who was a member of the school when a new  
 " desk was brought) that the Rev. Mr. Hall was  
 " the first objector (to whose opinion the Governors  
 " then present in the school assented after some he-  
 " sitation) to having the desk placed in the most  
 " proper part of the school, though a general re-  
 " quest of all the boys was made to the Rev. Mr.  
 " Hall

“ Hall and to the said Governors, signifying that  
 “ the desk would be useless where the said Mr.  
 “ Hall was about to place it, on account of the ex-  
 “ cessive cold and damp from the walls in that part  
 “ of the school during the winter;—that, so far  
 “ from Mr. Michell’s insulting the governors on  
 “ that occasion, he was not in the school with the  
 “ Governors during any part of the time they were  
 “ there. And further, this deponent believes that  
 “ the said Edward Michell has been injured by a  
 “ report propagated by Mr. Gerard Martin, that  
 “ the said Master was to be turned out of his office,  
 “ this deponent having been informed by gentle-  
 “ men of fortune and character that the said Mr.  
 “ Martin has propagated such a report. And fur-  
 “ ther, this deponent believes, that the said Master  
 “ has been insulted and ill-treated by the Go-  
 “ vernors of the school in several instances since  
 “ the death of the late Lord Berkeley: all which  
 “ this deponent believes the Master has borne with-  
 “ out retaliating, so as to exasperate or affront the  
 “ Governors in any respect. And this deponent  
 “ further believes, that the Governors have spent a  
 “ great part of the school-money unnecessarily, tho’  
 “ their plea for not paying the Master his salary is  
 “ poverty, and though the school-house in many  
 “ parts is in very bad condition.”

The



The following paper was signed and presented to the Right Reverend Visitor, in consequence of an information given in to his Lordship *that there was not a single boy educating at the school*, at a time when there really was a pretty good number of boys educating here. The information was given by a Governor. But as the intended injury is of a more private nature than many other preceding ones, and is calculated to affect myself only, the necessity of mentioning his name again is not urgent. He is gone from us never to return. May his good deeds follow him, and procure him a happy reception; and may the compassion of the recording angel drop that tear on his infirmities, which may blot them out for ever. A letter to myself from the Right Reverend Visitor soon followed this information, which his Lordship had received: from hence originated the subsequent address:

“ To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of  
“ Bath and Wells.

“ My Lord,

“ We whose names are hereunto subscribed,  
“ principal inhabitants of the town of Bruton in  
“ the county of Somerset, having been informed  
“ that it has been represented to your Lordship  
“ that

" that the present Master of the Grammar-School  
 " in this town *has for some time received his salary*  
 " *for doing nothing, as he has not a single boy to in-*  
 " *struct*, beg leave to undeceive your Lordship in  
 " that particular, and to declare, that though not a  
 " single boy had been instructed in the said Gram-  
 " mar-School for many years; till the appointment  
 " of the present Master, yet from the time of his  
 " being appointed to the day of the date hereof,  
 " without intermission, the boys of the town, and  
 " frequently those of the adjacent parishes, have re-  
 " sorted to the said school, and have been constantly  
 " and regularly instructed by the present Master in  
 " Grammar and Grammar-learning on the terms  
 " and conditions prescribed by the charter, that is,  
 " as free boys. To the truth of the above asser-  
 " tion the whole body of the inhabitants of the  
 " town, as well as the parents and friends of those  
 " boys who are at present receiving their educa-  
 " tion at the said school, are able to bear testimony,  
 " if such their testimony shall be required or deemed  
 " expedient by your Lordship.

" BRUTON,  
 " Aug. 8, 1778.

" T. Sampson,  
 " L. Dampier."

But we will for a moment suppose the informa-  
 tion alluded to in the address to have been true,  
 would

would it appear a matter of wonder to the reader, if not even one boy had been found remaining at the school after so many repeated efforts made to injure it? Was it not natural for the neighbourhood thus to reason:—"The Governors of the School, "who are by their office bound in duty to cherish "and protect their school, must certainly be influenced by very particular motives for acting "thus in opposition to it?" This is no more than a just and logical conclusion; for the Governor of a school is but another word for its Guardian. Whether any fault on the part of the Master was publicly alledged by the Governors in vindication of their own conduct, I have never heard. But at a meeting of the Governors (the last, as well as my memory informs me, at which I was present with the late Mr. Martin) that gentleman, in the presence and hearing of the Governors, fully explained the motives for their past conduct. If the following are not the exact words he made use of to me, they convey his precise meaning: *Mr. Michell, none of those disagreeable matters, which have happened, would have happened, had you attended our meetings.* It is necessary to add, that I constantly attended the meetings of the Governors, as long as, nay longer than I found myself treated with propriety. And one is apt to think that such an un-

remitting

remitting opposition for so long a course of years to every effort I could make, an opposition which on the most moderate computation has cost me two thousand pounds, will be deemed a penalty rather too severe for the omission of a compliment, which the treatment that I met with from the Governors rendered it impossible (as the leading Governors well knew) for me to pay, without being very deservedly held up as an object of ridicule, for petitioning, in the language of the third hero of the Tale of a Tub, "Worthy Sirs, do me the honour of another good flap in the chaps!" But I had received too many unmerited flaps already at their meetings: I felt myself sore; I had been insulted, and refused to subject myself to further insults.

"The very head and front of my offending

"Has this extent, no more."

For this *offence* in the language of Governors, but which, I trust, the reader will call by another name, for this *negative offence* (for non-attendance at meetings where I had not the least grain, particle, or atom of business to transact, is the sole imputation,—is the whole amount of the charge) the School-house has been suffered to become ruinous  
to

to such a degree; as that buckets have been necessarily placed for a long continuance as receptacles for the rain descending through the tiles and ceiling into our sleeping-rooms.

For this offence a report has been industriously propagated that *the Master was* on a fixed day *to be turned out of his office.*

For this offence a right of taking boarders has been denied to the master.

For this offence gentlemen of considerable fortune have been informed, that they cannot pay for the education of their sons here without doing a very great injury to the school.

For this offence the sum of thirty pounds a year, purchased by the bounty of the late Lord Berkeley of the Governors of the School by his Lordship's payment of their debt of 250*l.* for the express purpose of benefiting the present Master, was taken from him soon after his Lordship's death, nor was it restored till the Governors compelled the Master to make his appeal to the Right Reverend Visitor. Gratitude forbids me to withhold the following anecdote:—"By some, I know not what, means  
the

the knowledge of this detention of my salary had reached the late Henry Hoare, esq; of Stourhead, with whose real friendship I was honoured in this and other instances. Mr. Meffiter one day called at my house, and acquainted me that he [was directed by Mr. Hoare to take every necessary step in my defence against the Governors of the school.

For this offence, false information was given to the Right Reverend Visitor of the School, that not a single boy was educating here, at a time when there really was a pretty good number at the school.

And for this offence the Master has been maligned, distressed, harrassed, and worried; his efforts been defeated; his property been invaded; and a flourishing school of his own raising been reduced to that wretched state in which he found it.

Here I must intrude on the reader's patience, and request him to go back with me to that period, at which the Right Reverend Visitor determined the matter respecting my salary, and my right of taking boarders, both in my favour. On both these subjects his Lordship delivered his sentiments in the presence of the Governors and the Master. After these decisions the Governors acquainted his  
 Lordship

Lordship that they had an engine belonging to the school, which had till then been always kept in the church; that they thought it right that the Master should have the most easy access to it in case of a fire happening in his house, and proposed that the Master should give up half of the only outhouse on the premises for the purpose of placing the engine in; that they would divide the outhouse by a partition wall; and, that it might still be useful to the public, that they would have a door placed towards the street for getting out the engine at; and that the Master's family might not be disturbed unnecessarily for his key of the house, in case of a fire in the town by night, that a second key should be placed in the hands of the man who had the care of the engine. I could with less inconvenience have parted with any room in my house than this. And I was then almost as fully assured as I am now, that inconvenience to me was the only motive by which the Governors were actuated in making the proposal: they knew this outhouse to be perpetually full of cyder, coals, wood, &c. But for the sake of giving no further trouble to his Lordship on a business of *such* a nature, I granted their request. The partition was built, and the door set up. Will the man of candour, will the fair-dealing man, give me credit, when I tell him that, notwithstanding

ing my repeated applications for a key, the Governors refused me a key during the whole seven or eight years for which they were in possession of this house? But such is the fact.

The following short letter from me to the late Mr. Martin, will be a proof of my application to two senior wardens.

*“ Bruton, April 11, 1778.*

“ SIR,

“ The School-house, which at my coming into  
 “ it, you as senior warden then engaged should be  
 “ painted once in two years, is now, you may ima-  
 “ gine, for want of painting, in very bad condition.  
 “ The great gate, which the late Lord Berkeley  
 “ gave us, the shoots, and the rails before the house,  
 “ will, if not painted soon, become rotten. The  
 “ other repairs I have in general terms acquainted  
 “ you with long since. The intention of my giv-  
 “ ing up part of an outhouse belonging to me, for  
 “ the purpose of having the engine near me in case  
 “ of a fire, has not been answered, as I have hitherto  
 “ had no key sent me. I made a personal applica-  
 “ tion for a key to Mr. Hall, when senior warden,  
 “ who, for reasons best known to himself, was far  
 “ above condescending to give me an answer. This  
 “ application

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“ application was made, when there was at that instant a fire at Discove, and half the town was applying to me for the key of the house.

“ I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

“ EDWARD MICHELL.”

“ *To Gerard Martin, esq.*

On finding myself thus artfully defrauded of a room by the violation of a compact clear and undisputed, (I use the word *defrauded* as most applicable of any, I can at present recollect, to the transaction) and on feeling myself reduced to great inconvenience through the want of it, I considered myself, after such a violation of the compact for a series of years, as indisputably warranted in the resumption of my property thus artfully invaded and illegally withheld. I say withheld *illegally*; for, by a *legal* appointment, all the premises are mine; and through the infringement of the above compact on the part of the Governors (a compact which cannot be denied, for this was not a transaction in private between the Governors and myself *only*.) from the day on which the first refusal of a key was made, and access to the engine was denied, from that day the compact became void, the right of resumption  
reverted

reverted to me, a right as legal as it was apparently equitable. The easiest method I judged the best; and therefore did not order the partition to be taken down. To the Rev. Mr. John Goldebrough, the senior warden, I applied, and desired him to order it to be taken down. After being acquainted with the condition of the agreement, on which I granted the use of the room to the Governors, (for when it was granted, Mr. Goldebrough was not a Governor) he ordered workmen to take down the partition and to remove the engine. This the workmen omitted to do for two or three weeks, when Mr. Goldebrough issued a second order, which was immediately executed. At a meeting of the Governors, which I was present at by the particular invitation of the senior warden Mr. L. Dampier, and at which were likewise present the only two that remained of the old set of Governors, which meeting was held, I believe, not many months after the engine was by Mr. Goldebrough's direction removed; Mr. Goldebrough asserted, in my presence, that the taking down the partition and removal of the engine were quite a temporary business, and that I was to give up the room to the Governors again, if they should ever want it. I could not forbear to express my astonishment to Mr. Goldebrough at his assertion and want of resolu-

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tion;

tion; for to that cause I then imputed his conduct, as it had been heard that the two senior Governors had taken his order for the removal of the engine in dudgeon. Since that meeting, Mr. Goldeſbrough, I have been informed, has continued to aſſert what he then aſſerted, and to add, *that I promiſed to give up the room and to rebuild the partition at my own expence at the expiration of two or three months, during which time I wanted it for a particular purpoſe.* The purpoſe for which I *then* wanted it, I acquainted Mr. Goldeſbrough with. I went to him with a determination to reſume the room, whether Mr. Goldeſbrough ſhould give or withhold his conſent. Who is there, that in ſimilar circumſtances would not have determined on the ſame meaſure? The only part of the converſation neceſſary to be mentioned is this: The form of words I pretend not to remember; their exact and precise purport was what follows: Mr. Goldeſbrough's queſtion to me was, Whether, if the Governors ſhould want the room again, and I ſhould not want it, I would let them have it? My answer was, That there never would be a time when I ſhould not be in *very great want* of it. And I here make this declaration as a man and a clergyman, that I never made Mr. Goldeſbrough during our converſation a promiſe to give up the room, and that ſuch a thought was the

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farthest from my heart, and such language from my tongue.

But let us see whether a moment's reasoning will not lead us to the discovery of the truth in this case. If I was to rebuild the partition at my own expence (and here again I solemnly declare that not a word ever passed between Mr. Goldeſbrough and myself relative to its being rebuilt by me or by any other person,) how happens it that the Governors were at the expence of taking it down? Does Mr. Goldeſbrough mean that there were two agreements, and that it was stipulated that the Governors should pay for taking it down on the condition of my rebuilding it? Or, will he have us understand that I engaged with him to take down the partition at my own cost, and refused afterwards to fulfil such engagement?

Again, what a rent was I by this account to have paid for this half of an outhouse for two, three, or four months, if to rebuild the partition (I speak from conjecture only, and not as a man well-informed) was to have cost me about four pounds?

But the grand argument that no such compact *de novo* between us ever really existed is this: The

ground on which I stood at the time of my applying to Mr. Goldesbrough, is seen to be firm, and such as would support me. An agreement had been entered into between the old set of Governors and myself. The condition, on which I granted them the use of the outhouse, had been on their part violated confessedly. The agreement of course became void. To this I was no stranger, nor was I insensible of the impropriety of conduct made use of towards me. Is it supposable then, without supposing one of the greatest absurdities, that I should exchange the firm ground on which I stood, for that which would sink under me? that I should apply for *leave* to make use of this room for a few months, and after that time give the Governors a right of returning it *ad libitum*? My situation, seen in this point of view, precludes, in my conception, the possibility of my entering into further agreements with the Governors; more especially while I saw two of the former set remaining, with appetites as keen as if they had never taken one slice from my peace and comfort, and which seemed to increase from feeding.

But it matters not, I mean as far as it bears relation to the subject of my salary, where the truth lies; for on my calling on the late senior warden,

Mr.

Mr. Dampier, to require the payment of my salary, he frankly made this declaration, *Whether you are right with respect to the affair of the outhouse, or Mr. Goldeſbrough, is of no consequence, for we are as obstinate as you, and are determined never to pay you your salary without law, till you give up the room.* Whatever his words were, such was their precise meaning.

But in the name of candor, in the name of common sense, in the name of common justice, and in the name of whatever bears but even the most *distant* relation to either of the three, from whence originates this omnipotence of our Governors? From what source is this their absolute dominion derived? By what authority has the unlimited power of rescinding the legal acts of their predecessors been delegated to them? By what law is the Master's freehold at this comfortable distance from Paris demanded? By what charter or appointment is his salary withheld? Has the Master shrunk from his duty? has he neglected to do that justice to those under his care, which all have a right to expect from him? To these two last questions an answer will come with greater propriety and delicacy from the gentlemen educated at the school, many of whom in the different professions are now  
settled

settled in this neighbourhood, than from the Master himself.

The truth is, the Governors, from the death of Lord Berkeley, during whose life, peace and happiness resided among us, have all along appeared to conceive the obligations between themselves and the Master of the school to be of a peculiar species, namely, as obligatory on him, but not on them. Their proceedings have manifestly disallowed a reciprocity of obligations, and an assumed superiority has marked their conduct. Hence, instead of viewing themselves in the light of persons appointed by the Royal charter, as coadjutors with the Master in promoting a work of the first importance in the opinion of educated men, their chief occupation has been a constant and uniform endeavour to disturb the peace and quiet of the Master, those grand requisites for the due performance of his duty, and to take up no inconsiderable portion of his time in getting his house repaired and his salary paid, which has been at many and various times detained without the least reason given for so arbitrary and illegal a measure. A strong proof this of the necessity that the *leading* men at least among the Governors or Trustees of a Grammar-School should be men of letters and education; for want of whose foster-

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ing hand many a public seminary, that would have, under their guidance, illuminated a whole district, has dwindled into insignificance, and remained useless for perhaps half a century.

The line of conduct pursued by the present Governors and the Master towards each other, will be exhibited in as clear a point of view, from the following transaction, as from any other that at present occurs to me :

In the year 1785, the late Mr. Ludwell Dampier, as senior warden, invited me to dine with the Governors at their meeting. Endeavouring to forget what was past, I went. After dinner Mr. Sampson was saying that it was rather inconvenient that the chest, containing writings and other papers relative to the affairs of the school, should be carried annually from the house of one senior warden to that of his successor, and therefore asked me, whether it was inconvenient that the chest should be deposited in a room in my house. Seeing this proposal agreeable to the Governors in general, I, without hesitation, replied, *You are welcome to make choice of any room in my house for this purpose.* They made choice of a room. Within a few days they sent a carpenter, who put a lock on the door,  
locked



locked it, and went off. Can the liberal-minded man form the most distant conjecture, what return was made me for such my readiness to oblige? He must be informed, for *guess* he cannot. From the day on which the door was locked by the carpenter in 1785 to the present, no Governors, or any other person for them, have been near the room, no chest, or one single article of any kind, has been deposited in the room, but it has remained locked, and I have been excluded from this part of my own house, for above seven years. Now was a man to analyze this treatment by a rational process, he would find its constituent parts or first principles reduced to, I believe, nearly equal quantities of a certain exotick named *Stat pro ratione voluntas*. This is of a noxious quality; and the present pitiable state of a great Monarch is thought to be owing to his having sucked in an improper quantity of it: it acts like the kava mentioned by Captain Cooke, which intoxicates and brings forth blotches over the body: indeed this last effect has been for some time expected to appear on the body of the above unhappy Monarch.

Of *puerility*; which is solely adapted to the constitutions and temperaments of young people, and is improper to be used by adults, and more especially by people advanced in years.

Of *cunning*, which is marvellously congruous and serviceable to creatures beneath man, but is never prescribed except by empiricks for the human species; as *regularly-bred physicians* are fully convinced that though it may serve a present purpose and afford a little temporary relief, the effects, which it leaves behind it, on the *vital and more noble parts*, are always dreadfully shocking.

Of *ripened malevolence*, or, in the language of the faculty, *malice*. This is the worst and most deadly species of the *night-shade*, and wonderful and destructive is it in its operations. It possesses *this* peculiarity, that if a man has a plant of it in his *trunk*, it shall not only rack him almost to death, but he can, by *opening* his trunk let out its *effluvia*, which (as when Pandora's box was opened) shall infect at any distance whatever, and be destructive of the happiness of good and bad, fair and foul, without distinction.

Was I to give a catalogue of the indignities, with which the Governors have been pleased to honour me from the death of Lord Berkeley, for reasons, of which my reader is equally conscious with myself, and I might truly add, equally conscious with the Governors, such a catalogue would protract  
this

this narrative to a nauseating length, nor would it tend to convince the public of more than I trust they are fully convinced of from the preceding pages.

As a proof that no *good* reasons for persecution ever subsisted, a motive of a very different nature from boasting compels me to make known the declaration of Mr. Harry Albin Martin, made in the year 1785 at a meeting of the Governors, and made in their presence and in mine: "Mr. Michell has discharged his duty as Master of the school with integrity and abilities." Not a dissentient voice was heard. Justice influenced Mr. Martin to make this declaration, and not friendship.

My conduct as Master of this school dares the light: I wish it to be scann'd minutely and critically, "without extenuation, without malice."—To superior abilities the knowledge of myself, as well as common prudence, will ever keep me from setting up pretensions. On the other hand, most deservedly should I incur public censure, did I not know myself equal to the duties of my office in this place. How difficult a task is it to speak of one's self with propriety! For my attendance on my duty, and attention during its performance, I beg leave to refer the reader to the gentlemen  
around

around us, who have been educated here. They are in truth the most competent judges both of the abilities and integrity of a Master.

Unchecked violence of temper will precipitate a man into a temporary phrenzy. However, if it is a matter of amusement to the violent among us to bandy about reputations during the crisis of the disease, right-welcome are they to make a shuttlecock of my reputation for *abilities*, and to verberate and reverberate it, till not even a poor solitary feather remains. In this case I have only to inform them, during their lucid intervals, that their amusement is unmanly and illiberal; and that, however cautiously their piece, their engine of destruction may be levelled at me, it cannot fail of hitting at the same time this town and neighbourhood, and that it may ultimately recoil on themselves; for the man, whose tongue is armed against every one, must be sottishly stupid in wondering that every one's tongue is armed against him: in this case he may be well assured the world will be ever ready to do him ample justice; and indeed

———— *nec lex est justior ulla,  
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.*

But there is a reputation of another kind, which every man, who deserves that name, values as his  
first,

first, his most precious possession, be his ~~others~~ what they may. No man can or should permit an unmerited attack to be made on his integrity, honour, or veracity, without expressing a full sense of the injury in terms of the warmest resentment against the vile traducer, the base assailant. Should then any of the sons of violence among us find himself disposed to charge me with neglecting the regular performance of my duty as Master of this school, at any period from the time of my first appointment to this day, or with having violated any compact entered into between the Governors and myself, or between any senior warden their representative and myself, or with having done any one act that could reasonably irritate the Governors, or give them just cause of offence, he injures me most basely: I am conscious of nothing of the kind, or that bears the most distant resemblance to it: nor in such circumstances will the world, I trust, impute to me a breach of decorum, while I address and take my leave of the creature, who is capable of thus meanly degrading himself, in the words of the honest author\* of the History of the Council of Trent, "*Mentiris impudentissime.*"

A word or two more, and I have done. The only charge brought against the Master by the

\* Father Paul.

former

former Governors was a sin of omission, to which nothing less than the ruin of the school was deemed an adequate punishment.

To dine with the Governors is certainly not a part of my duty. But still I always considered it as a compliment due in return for their compliment of invitation. Nor did I refrain from paying my respects to them, as long as I found myself treated with common propriety.

The *ostensible* offence against the present Governors is the Master's resumption of a room, which is his own by law, equity, and reason. For this (and for a few private causes with which two-thirds at least of the Governors are utterly unacquainted) his salary has been withheld from Midsummer 1790. It is proper to add, that the Master has made the Governors an offer of a bit of ground, equally convenient in all respects with the present room, for the purpose of building a shed on for their engine. This they have refused. It is necessary to subjoin, that a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who has a family, told the Master not many months since, and told it to others before, that had he twenty sons, he should never send one of them to him, while his salary remained unpaid. Thus has this  
truly

truly Royal endowment been devoted for many years to insignificance through the unreasonable caprice of those, who have been by the relation which they have borne to it, bound in duty to the public, to the present age, and to posterity; to give it their whole weight and influence, and to protect, support, and cherish it with activity, with energy; to guard the revenues of its estates with at least the same care and circumspection, with which their private property is guarded, and to permit no ill-timed neglect on the part of artificers, by which the trust may be *injured materially*, and which they would deem inadmissible in their own concerns. For the conscientious discharge of such duties, and a variety of others, the public have an equitable and undoubted claim on the trustees of every public charity. And a well-grounded application from the public to the guardian of charities for a neglect of duty, or for other improprieties, has never failed of proving a salutary and effectual remedy.

I beg the reader's indulgence for a minute or two longer.

This school, if properly conducted, must be viewed as a grand luminary set up to diffuse light through a whole nation. Its revenues are worthy the

the origin from whence they sprung: they reflect honour even on the Royal Founder. Through such revenues the most respectable abilities in a Master may be procured from either University. From such revenues exhibitions may be founded, enabling those pupils of the school, who stand in need of them, to proceed in their future studies without embarrassment. From such exhibitions, superior talents will of course be brought forward, which must otherwise have lain under the hand of chilling poverty, undistinguished and useless. From such exhibitions, for which there will be constant competitors, and which will thence prove an incitement to literary exertions, the school will fill, its reputation be established, and the benevolent design of the Royal Founder be fully answered. And from such revenues the school-house may be rendered a proper residence for the sons of our first families, and not remain in a state dishonourable to the Founder, through an implication of a *deficiency* of revenue to support it with propriety, which is far, very far from being the case.

Upon the whole, it is not an easy matter to ascertain by what motives the Governors have been hitherto influenced, or to what good end their proceedings have had a tendency. The ancient form

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of.



of government, coeval probably with the school, was subverted two years since, during the senior-wardenship of the Rev. Mr. Richard Goldesbrough, who made a voluntary resignation of the duties of his office, as far as they related to the Master and the repairs of the School-house. From that time the Master has been denied access to the senior-warden. Nor would the last-mentioned gentleman deign to receive a letter from the Master on school affairs, when he was in office, but remitted it unopened. Threats have occasionally been held forth that our Royal Seminary is to be reduced to a *Writing-School*, which is judged to be more *essentially serviceable*. But during the continuance of the present set of gentlemen in the neighbourhood, this degrading project can never be effected. And it is “devoutly to be wished,” that the posterity of the present nobility and gentlemen may be taught to look up to this Royal Seminary as to a jewel of inestimable value, and to guard it with a watchful and jealous eye:—as to a fountain, from which, if not unreasonably obstructed, knowledge, useful learning, and consequent happiness, will incessantly flow on to the most distant ages.

Of my best services and unremitting efforts to render myself useful in my station, the public may be

be ever assured. And opportunities of rendering myself *extensively* so would afford me abundant satisfaction. My endeavours to raise a school have once proved successful: and, but for the opposition which we have seen, we might many years since have been happy in *annually* meeting here a respectable number of gentlemen educated among us: a thought this that warms the heart. But let us not take a retrospective view of our affairs: it will prove but as a passage through a barren and dreary region, covered only with the galling productions of nature, briars and thorns. Let us rather look forward, not without hopes that the pacific dispositions of many of the Governors may at some happy moment be effectual to heal those divisions, which are too well known to not a few among us to originate from private animosity unreasonably conceived. Should the cool reasoning of those gentlemen have its due weight and influence with their colleagues in the government, peace and order will speedily take again their residence among us.— Hence, and hence *alone*, our school may lift up her head with unassuming confidence, as feeling herself in security under the protection of her nearest friends. Such protection may be expected to be productive of consequences interesting to all parties; to the Public, to the Governors, to the Master.

P. S. The

P.S. The payment of the Master's salary has  
been recommended by the HIGHEST AUTHORITY.

SCHOOL-HOUSE,

Sept. 7th, 1792.











